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GUESSES AT THE RIDDLE OF EXISTENCE.

BY GOLDWIN SMITH, D. C. L., LL. D.

NEVER before has the intellect of man been brought so directly face to face with the mystery of existence as it is now. Some veil of religious tradition has always been interposed. At the beginning of this century most minds still rested in the Mosaic cosmogony and the Noachic deluge. Greek speculation was free, and its freedom makes it an object of extreme interest to us at the present time. But it was not intensely serious ; it was rather the intellectual amusement of a summer day in Academe beneath the whispering plane.

No one who reads and thinks freely can doubt that the cosmogonical and historical foundations of traditional belief have been sapped by science and criticism. When the crust shall fall in appears to be a question of time, and the moment can hardly fail to be one of peril ; not least in the United States, where education is general and opinion spreads rapidly over an even field, with no barriers to arrest its sweep..

Ominous symptoms already appear. Almost all the churches have trouble with heterodoxy and are trying clergymen for heresy. Quite as significant seems the growing tendency of the pulpit to concern itself less with religious dogma and more with the estate of man in his present world. It is needless to say what voices of unbelief outside the churches are heard and how high are the intellectual quarters from which they come. Christian ethics still in part retain their hold. So does the Church as a social centre and a reputed safeguard of social order. But faith in the dogmatic creed and the history is waxing faint. Ritualism itself seems to betray the need of a new stimulus and to be in some measure an æsthetic substitute for spiritual religion.

Dogmatic religion may be said to have received a fatal wound

three centuries ago, when the Ptolemaic system was succeeded by the Copernican, and the real relation of the earth to the universe was disclosed. Dogmatic religion is geocentric. It assumes that our earth is the centre of the universe, the primary object of divine care, and the grand theatre of divine administration. The tendency was carried to the height of travesty when an insanely ultramontane party at Rome meditated, as, if we may believe Dr. Pusey, it did, the declaration of a hypostatic union of the Pope and the Holy Ghost. But it was in Byzantine or mediæval theosophy that the travesty had its source. The effect of the blow dealt by Copernicus was long suspended, but it is fully felt now that the kingdom of science is come, and the bearings of scientific discovery are generally known. When daylight gives place to starlight we are transported from the earth to the universe, and to the thoughts which the contemplation of the universe begets. “What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?” is the question that then rises in our minds. Is it possible that so much importance as the creeds imply can attach to this tiny planet and to the little drama of humanity? We might be half inclined to think that man has taken himself too seriously and that in the humorous part of our nature, overlooked by philosophy, is to be found the key to his mystery. The feeling is enhanced when we consider that we have no reason for believing that our senses are exhaustive, however much Science, with her telescopes, microscopes, and spectroscopes, may extend their range. We cannot tell that we are not like the sightless denizens of the Mammoth Cave, unconsciously living in the midst of wonders and glories beyond our ken.

Nor has the natural theology of the old school suffered from free criticism much less than revelation. Optimism of the orthodox kind seems no longer possible. Christianity itself, indeed, is not optimistic. It represents the earth as cursed for man's sake, ascribing the curse to primeval sin, and the prevalence of evil in the moral world as not only great but permanent, since those who enter the gate of eternal death are many, while those who enter the gate of eternal life are few. Natural theology of the optimistic school and popular religion have thus been at variance with each other. The old argument from design is now met with the answer that we have nothing with which to compare this world, and therefore, cannot tell whether it was possible

for it to be other than it is. Mingled with the signs of order, science discloses apparent signs of disorder, miscarriage, failure, wreck, and waste. Our satellite, so far as we can see, is either a miscarriage or a wreck. Natural selection by a struggle for existence, protracted through countless ages, with the painful extinction of the weaker members of the race, and even of whole races, is hardly the course which benevolence, such as we conceive it, combined with omnipotence, would be expected to take. If in the case of men suffering is discipline, though this can hardly be said when infants die or myriads are indiscriminately swept off by plague, in the case of animals, which are incapable of discipline and have no future life, it can be nothing but suffering; and it often amounts to torture. The evil passions of men, with all the miseries and horrors which they have produced, are a part of human nature, which itself is a part of creation. Through the better parts of human nature and what there is of order, beneficence, majesty, tenderness, and beauty in the universe, a spirit is felt appealing to ours, and a promise seems to be conveyed. But if omnipotence and benevolence are to meet, it must apparently be at a point at present beyond our ken. These are the perplexities which obtrude themselves on a scientific age.

What is man? Whence comes he? Whither goes he? In the hands of what power is he? What are the character and designs of that power? These are questions which, now directly presented to us, are of such overwhelming magnitude that we almost wonder at the zeal and heat which other questions, such as party politics, continue to excite. The interest felt in them, however, is daily deepening, and an attentive audience is assured to anyone who comes forward with a solution, however crude, of the mystery of existence. Attentive audiences have gathered round Mr. Kidd, Mr. Drummond, and Mr. Balfour, each of whom has a theory to propound. Mr. Kidd's work has had special vogue, and the compliments which its author pays to Professor Weismann have been reciprocated by that luminary of science.

Mr. Drummond undertakes to reconcile, and more than reconcile, our natural theology and our moral instincts to the law of evolution. His title, *The Ascent of Man*, is not new; probably it has been used by more than one writer before; nor is he the first to point out that the humble origin of the human species, instead of dejecting, ought to encourage us, since the

being who has risen from an ape to Socrates and Newton may hope to rise still higher in the future, if not by further physical development, which physiology seems to bar by pronouncing the brain unsusceptible of further organic improvement, yet by intellectual and moral effort. Mr. Drummond treats his subject with great brilliancy of style and adorns it with very interesting illustrations. Not less firmly than Voltaire's optimist persuaded himself that this was the best of all possible worlds, he has persuaded himself that evolution was the only right method of creation. He ultimately identifies it with love. The cruelties incidental to it he palliates with a complacency which sometimes provokes a smile. All of them seem to him comparatively of little account, inasmuch as the struggle for existence was to lead up to the struggle for the existence of others, in other words, to the production of maternity and paternity, with the altruism, as he terms it, or, as we have hitherto termed it, the affection, attendant on those relations. To reconcile us to the sufferings of the vanquished in the struggle he dilates on "the keenness of its energies, the splendor of its stimulus, its bracing effect on character, its wholesome lessons throughout the whole range of character." "Without the vigorous weeding of the imperfect," he says, "the progress of the world would not have been possible." Pleasant reading this for "the imperfect"!

"If fit and unfit indiscriminately had been allowed to live and reproduce their kind, every improvement which any individual might acquire would be degraded to the common level in the course of a few generations. Progress can only start by one or two individuals shooting ahead of their species; and their life-gain can only be conserved by their being shut off from their species—or by their species being shut off from them. Unless shut off from their species their acquisition will either be neutralized in the course of time by the swamping effect of inter-breeding with the common herd, or so diluted as to involve no real advance. The only chance for evolution, then, is either to carry off these improved editions into 'physiological isolation,' or to remove the unimproved editions by wholesale death. The first of these two alternatives is only occasionally possible; the second always. Hence the death of the unevolved, or of the unadapted in reference to some new and higher relation with environment, is essential to the perpetuation of a useful variation."

This reasoning, with much more to the same effect, is plainly a limitation of omnipotence, and supposes that the ruling power of the universe could attain its end only at the expense of wholesale carnage and suffering; which cannot be glazed over, and which, as the weakness was not the fault of the weak, but of their

Maker, is in apparently irreconcilable conflict with our human notions of benevolence and justice.

This, however, is not all. We might, comparatively speaking, be reconciled to Mr. Drummond's plan of creation if all the carnage and suffering could be shown to be necessary or even conducive to the great end of giving birth to humanity and love. But Mr. Drummond himself has to admit that natural selection by no means invariably works in the direction of progress; that in the case of parasites it has consummated almost utter degradation. The phenomena of parasites and entozoa, with the needless torments which they inflict, appear irreconcilable with any optimistic theory of the direction of suffering and destruction to a paramount and compensating end. Not only so, but all the extinct races except those which are in the line leading up to man and may be numbered among his progenitors, must, apparently, upon Mr. Drummond's hypothesis, have suffered and perished in vain. That "a price, a price in pain, and assuredly sometimes a very terrible price," has been paid for the evolution of the world, after all is said, Mr. Drummond admits to be certain. But he holds it indisputable that even at the highest estimate the thing bought with that price was none too dear, inasmuch as it was nothing less than the present progress of the world. So he thinks we "may safely leave Nature to look after her own ethic." Probably we might if all the pain was part of the price. But we are distinctly told that it was not; so that there is much of it in which, with our present lights or any that Mr. Drummond is able to afford us, men can hardly help thinking that they see the ruthless operation of blind chance. Nature, being a mere abstraction, has no ethic to look after; nor has Evolution, which is not a power, but a method, though it is personified, we might almost say deified, by its exponent. But if there is not some higher authority which looks after ethic, what becomes of the ethic of man? The most inhuman of vivisectors, if he could show that his practice really led, or was at all likely to lead, to knowledge, would have a better plea than, in the case of suffering and destruction which have led to nothing, the philosophy of evolution can by itself put in for the Author of our being.

Mr. Drummond's treatise, like those of other evolutionists, at least of the optimistic school, assumes the paramount value of the type, and the rightfulness of sacrificing individuals without limit

to its perfection and preservation. But this assumption surely requires to be made good, both to our intellects and to our hearts. The ultimate perfection and preservation of the type cannot, so far as we see, indemnify the individuals who have perished miserably in the preliminary stages. Besides, what is the probable destiny of the type itself? Science appears to tell us pretty confidently that the days of our planet, however many they may be, are numbered, and that it is doomed at last to fall back into primeval chaos, with all the types which it may contain. Far from having an individual interest in the evolution of the type, the sufferers of the ages before Darwin had not even the clear idea of a type for their consolation. Evolutionists, in their enthusiasm for the species, are apt to bestow little thought on the sentient members of which it consists. "Man" is a mere generalization. This they forget, and speak as if all men personally shared the crown of the final heirs of human civilization. The following passage is an instance:—

"Science is charged, be it once more recalled, with numbering Man among the beasts, and levelling his body with the dust. But he who reads for himself the history of creation as it is written by the hand of Evolution will be overwhelmed by the glory and honor heaped upon this creature. To be a Man, and to have no conceivable successor; to be the fruit and crown of the long-past eternity, and the highest possible fruit and crown; to be the last victor among the decimated phalanxes of earlier existences, and to be nevermore defeated; to be the best that Nature in her strength and opulence can produce; to be the first of the new order of beings who, by their dominion over the lower world and their equipment for a higher, reveal that they are made in the Image of God—to be this is to be elevated to a rank in Nature more exalted than any philosophy or any poetry or any theology has ever given to man. Man was always told that his place was high; the reason for it he never knew till now; he never knew that his title deeds were the very laws of Nature, that he alone was the Alpha and Omega of Creation, the beginning and the end of Matter, the final goal of Life."

To be the last victor among the decimated phalanxes of earliest existences, and to be nevermore defeated, is, to say the least, a different sort of satisfaction from the glorious triumph of love in which the process of Evolution, according to Mr. Drummond, ends, and in virtue of which he proclaims that Evolution is nothing but the Involution of love, the revelation of Infinite Spirit, the Eternal Life returning to itself. It even reminds us a little of the unamiable belief that in the next world the sight of the wicked in torment will be a part of the enjoyment of the righteous. Perhaps there is also a touch of lingering geocentri-

cism in this rapturous exaltation of Man. Evolution can give us no assurance that there are not in other planets creatures no less superior to man than he is to the lower tribes upon this earth.

The crown of evolution in Mr. Drummond's system is the evolution of a mother, accompanied by that of a father, which, however, appears to be inferior in degree. The chapters on this subject are more than philosophy; they are poetry, soaring almost into rhapsody. "The goal," Mr. Drummond says, "of the whole plant and animal kingdoms seems to have been the creation of a family which the very naturalist has to call mammals." The following passage is the climax :

"But by far the most vital point remains. For we have next to observe how this bears directly on the theme we set out to explore—the Evolution of Love. The passage from mere Otherism, in the physiological sense, to Altruism, in the moral sense, occurs in connection with the due performance of her natural task by her to whom the Struggle for the Life of Others is assigned. That task, translated into one great word, is Maternity—which is nothing but the Struggle for the Life of Others transfigured to the moral sphere. Focused in a single human being, this function, as we rise in history, slowly begins to be accompanied by those heaven-born psychical states which transform the femaleness of the older order into the Motherhood of the new. When one follows Maternity out of the depths of lower Nature, and beholds it ripening in quality as it reaches the human sphere, its character, and the character of the processes by which it is evolved, appear in their full divinity. For of what is maternity the mother? Of children? No; for these are the mere vehicle of its spiritual manifestation. Of affection between female and male? No; for that, contrary to accepted beliefs, has little to do in the first instance with sex-relations. Of what then? Of Love itself, of Love as Love, of Love as Life, of Love as Humanity, of Love as the pure and undefiled fountain of all that is eternal in the world. In the long stillness which follows the crisis of Maternity, witnessed only by the new and helpless life which is at once the last expression of the older function and the unconscious vehicle of the new, Humanity is born."

The father seems to be here shut out from the apotheosis; though why, except from a sort of philosophic gallantry, it is difficult to discern. The man who toils from morning till night to support wife and child surely has not less to do with it than the woman who feeds the child from her breast.

Somewhat paradoxical as it may seem, Mr. Drummond maintains that love did not come from lovers. It was not they that bestowed this gift upon the world. It was the first child, "till whose appearance man's affection was non-existent, woman's was frozen; and man did not love the woman, and woman did not love the man." Apparently, then, in a childless couple there can

be no love. Here, according to Mr. Drummond, is the birth of Altruism, for which all creation has travailed from the beginning of time. This appears to him a satisfactory solution of the problem of existence. Yet the races which have been sacrificed to the production of altruism, if they were critical and could find a voice, might ask if there was anything totally unselfish in the indulgence of the sexual passion, which after all plays its part in the matter, and of which the birth of a child is the unavoidable, not perhaps always the welcome, consequence. To the mother the child is necessary for a time in order to relieve her of a physical secretion ; while it repays her care by its endearments, the enjoyment of which is altruistic only on the irrational hypothesis that affection and domesticity are not parts of self. To both parents, in the primitive state at all events, children are necessary as the support and protection of old age. Beautiful and touching parental affection is ; pure altruism it is not. Very admirable, as a part of man's estate, it is ; but we can hardly accept its appearance as a sufficient justification of all that has been suffered in the process of evolution or as a solution of the mystery of existence. It is curious that Mr. Drummond should place the happiest scene of female development and all that depends on it in the country where divorces are most common and the increase of their number is most rapid. He may have noted, too, that in that same country and among higher civilized races families are proportionately small and fewer women become mothers.

Then put the mammalia as high as we will in the scale of being, they are mortal. Evolution tells us complacently that death is necessary to the progress of the species. It may be so ; but what is that to the individual ? The more intense and exalted affection, whether conjugal or parental, is, the more heart-rending is the thought of the parting which any day and any one of a thousand accidents may bring, while it is sure to come after a few years. Pleasure and happiness are different things. Pleasure may be enjoyed for the moment without any thought of the future. The condemned criminal may enjoy it, and, it seems, does not uncommonly enjoy it in eating his last meal. But happiness appears to be hardly possible without a sense of security, much less with annihilation always in sight. The oracle to which we are listening has told us nothing about a life beyond the present. It is needless to say how much the character of that

question has been altered since the corporeal origin and relations of our mental faculties, and of what theology calls the soul, have been apparently disclosed by science. The thought of conscious existence without end is one which makes the mind, as it were, ache, and under which imagination reels; yet the thought of annihilation is not welcome, nor has it, up to this time, been distinctly faced by man. If ever it should be distinctly faced, its influence on life and action can hardly fail to be felt. Is the evolutionary optimist himself content to believe that nothing will survive the wreck, inevitable, if science is to be trusted, of this world?

To say that a particular solution of a difficulty is incomplete is not to say that the difficulty is insoluble or even to pronounce the particular solution worthless. Mr. Drummond's solution may be incomplete, and yet it may have value. The only moral excellence of which we have any experience or can form a distinct idea, is that produced by moral effort. If we try to form an idea of moral excellence unproduced by effort, the only result is seraphic insipidity. This may seem to afford a glimpse of possible reconciliation between evolution and our moral instincts. If upward struggle towards perfection, rather than perfection created by fiat, is the law of the universe, we may see in it, at all events, something analogous to the law of our moral nature.

Mr. Kidd's work was criticised in detail in the last number of this REVIEW by the vigorous pen of Mr. Roosevelt. His theory is that man owes his progress to his having acted against his reason in obedience to a supernatural and extra-rational sanction of action which is identified with religion. The interest of the individual and that of society, Mr. Kidd holds to be radically opposed to each other. Reason bids the individual prefer his own interest. The supernatural and extra-rational sanction bids him prefer the interest of society, which is assumed to be paramount, and thus civilization advances. The practical conclusion is that the churches are the greatest instruments of human progress.

What does Mr. Kidd mean by reason? He appears to regard it as a special organ or faculty, capable of being contradicted by another faculty, as one sense sometimes for a moment contradicts another sense, or as our senses are corrected by our intelligence

in the case of the apparent motion of the sun. But our reason is the sum of all the faculties and powers which lead us to conviction or guide us in action. To be misled by it when weak or perverted is very possible ; to act consciously against it is not. Simeon Stylites obeys it as well as Sardanapalus or Jay Gould. He believes, however absurdly, that the Deity accepts the sacrifice of self-torture, and that it will be well for the self-torturer in the sum of things. His self-torture is therefore in accordance with his reason. A supernatural sanction, supposing its reality to be proved, becomes a part of the *data* on which reason acts, or rather it becomes, for the occasion, the sole *datum*; and to obey it, instead of being unreasonable, is the most reasonable thing in the world. Misled by his reason, we repeat, to any extent a man may be, both in matters speculative and practical; but he can no more think or act outside of his reason, that is, the entirety of his impressions and inducements, than he can jump out of his skin. What Mr. Kidd seems at bottom to mean is that we may and do, with the best results, prefer social to individual, and moral to material, objects. But this is a totally different thing from acting against reason, and while it requires a certain elevation of character, it requires no extra-rational motive.

Mr. Kidd speaks of "reason" and the capacity for acting with his fellows in society as "two new forces which made their advent with man." He cannot mean, what his words might be taken to imply, that the rudiments of reason are not discernible in brutes, or that sociability does not prevail in the herd, the swarm, and the hive. To the herd, the swarm, and the hive sacrifices of the individual animal or insect are made like those of the individual man to his community. Is there supernatural or extra-rational sanction in the case of the deer, the ant, or the bee?

Altruism, acting against reason with a supernatural and extra-rational sanction, is, according to Mr. Kidd, the motive power of progress. But this altruism of which we hear so much, what is it? Man is not only a self-regardant, but a sympathetic, domestic, and social being. He is so by nature, just as he is a biped or a mammal. How he became so the physiologist and psychologist must be left to explain. But a sympathetic, domestic, and social being he is, and in gratifying his sympathetic, domestic, or social propensities, he is no more altruistic, if altruism means disregard of self, than he is when he gratifies his

desire of food or motion. Self is not disregarded because self is sympathetic, domestic, and social. The man of feeling identifies himself with his kind; the father with his children; the patriot with his state ; and they all look in various forms for a return of their affection or devotion. The man in each of the cases goes out of his narrower self, but he does not go out of self. Show us the altruist who gives up his dinner to benefit the inhabitants of the planet Mars and we will admit the existence of altruism in the sense in which the term seems to be used by Mr. Kidd and some other philosophers of to-day.

Reason, as defined by Mr. Kidd, appears to be a faculty which tells us what is desirable, but does not tell us what is possible "The lower classes of our population," he says, "have no sanction from reason for maintaining existing conditions." "They should in self-interest put an immediate end to existing social conditions." Why, so they would if they had the power, supposing their condition and the causes of it to be what Mr. Kidd represents. It is not altruism that prevents them but necessity ; the same necessity which constrains people of all classes to submit to evils of various kinds, submission to which, if unnecessary, would be idiotic. That poverty and calamity have been endured more patiently in the hope of a compensation hereafter is true. but makes no difference as to the reasonableness of the endurance. From a comparison of the two sentences just quoted, it would appear that Mr. Kidd identifies reason with self-interest, and, therefore, with something antagonistic to society. Whereas, in a sociable being conformity to the laws of society is reason. "The interests of the social organism and of the individual," says Mr. Kidd, "are and must remain antagonistic." Why so in the case of a man any more than in that of a bee ?

What is the "supernatural and extra-rational sanction" in virtue of which man acts against the dictates of his reason, and by so acting makes progress ? Religion. What is religion ?

"A religion is a form of belief providing an ultra-rational sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antagonistic, and by which the former are rendered subordinate to the latter in the general interests of the evolution which the race is undergoing."

Here is a definition of religion without mention of God. The supernatural sanction is religion, and religion is a supernatural

sanction. This surely does not give us much new light. But we are further told that "there can never be such a thing as a rational religion." Superstition, such as the worship of Moloch, that of Apis, that of the gods of Mexico, or mediæval religion in its debased form, is not rational, nor will our calling it supernatural or extra-rational make it an influence above nature and reason, or prove it to have been the motive power of progress, which, on the contrary, it has retarded and sometimes, as in the case of Egypt, killed outright. The religions which in their day have been instruments of progress, and among which may perhaps be numbered, at a grade lower than Christianity, Mohammedanism and Buddhism, have owed their character to their rational adaptation to human nature and their consecration of rational effort. They are counterparts, not of the polytheistic state religion of Greece, but of the Socratic philosophy, which had a divinity of its own, the impersonation of its morality, and paid homage to the state polytheism only by sacrificing a cock to Æsculapius. Christianity, as it came from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth, was, like the philosophy of Socrates, unliturgical and unsacerdotal: its liturgy was one simple prayer. "Supernatural" is a convenient word, but it by implication begs the question, and when applied to superstitions is most fallacious. "Infranatural," or something implying degradation and grossness, not elevation above the world of sense, would be the right expression. Christian ethics, as distinguished from dogma, are not supernatural; they are drawn from, and adapted to, human nature. It is disappointing to find that a theorist who makes everything depend on the influence of religion should not have attempted to ascertain precisely what religion is and what is its origin, or to distinguish from each other the widely diverse phenomena which bear the name. His sanction itself calls for a sanction and calls in vain.

When a hypothesis will not bear inspection in itself, time is wasted in applying it, or testing its applications, to history. But Mr. Kidd says of the first fourteen centuries after Christ :

"So far, fourteen centuries of the history of our civilization had been devoted to the growth and development of a stupendous system of other-worldliness. The conflict against reason had been successful to a degree never before equalled in the history of the world. The super-rational sanction of conduct had attained a strength and universality unknown in the Roman and Greek civilizations. The State was a divine institution. The ruler held his place by divine right, and every political office and all subsidiary power issued from him in virtue of the same authority. Every consideration of the present

was overshadowed in men's minds by conceptions of a future life, and the whole social and political system and the individual lives of men had become profoundly tinged with the prevailing ideas."

Of all the actions by which mediæval civilization was moulded and advanced, what percentage does Mr. Kidd suppose to have been performed under religious influence or from a spiritual motive? How many feudal kings and lords—how many, even, of the ecclesiastical statesmen of the Middle Ages does he suppose to have been carrying on a conflict with reason for objects other than worldly and under the inspiration of divine right? How much resemblance to the character of the Founder of Christianity would he have found among the rulers and the active spirits of the community or even of the Church? How much among the occupants of the Papal throne itself?

It has already been pointed out that Mr. Kidd, to say the least, overstates his case in saying that Christianity was directly opposed by all the intellectual forces of the time. So close was the affinity of Roman Stoicism to it that one eminent French writer has undertaken to demonstrate the influence of Christianity on the writings of the Roman Stoics. But it had also an ally in the melancholy of a falling empire and a perishing civilization. It had intellectual champions as soon as it had intellectual assailants, and their arguments were addressed to reason. The pessimistic melancholy of a falling empire and the revolt from a decrepit polytheism were also intellectual or partly intellectual forces on its side.

In the recent concessions of political power by the upper classes to the masses, Mr. Kidd finds an example of altruism prevailing over reason. That something has in the course of this revolution occasionally prevailed over reason might be very plausibly maintained. Whether it was anything supernatural or extra-rational seems very doubtful. In Great Britain, for instance, the extension of the franchise in 1832 was the result of a conflict between classes and parties carried on in a spirit as far as possible from altruistic and pushed to the very verge of civil war. Afterwards, the Whig leader finding himself politically becalmed, brought in a new Reform Bill to raise the wind, and was outbid by Derby and Disraeli, whose avowed object was to "dish the Whigs." Of altruistic self-sacrifice it would be difficult in the whole process to find much trace.

If this branch of the inquiry were to be pursued, it might be worth while for Mr. Kidd to consider the case of Japan, the progress of which of late has been so marvellously rapid. It appears that in Japan, while the lower classes have a superstition at once very gross and very feeble, the upper classes, by whom the movement has been initiated and carried forward, have no genuine religion, but at most official forms, such as could not sustain action against self-interest.

The cause of human progress has been the desire of man to improve his condition, ever ascending as, with the success of his efforts, fresh possibilities of improvement were brought within his view. It is in this respect that he differs from the brutes. Mechanical evolution and selection by struggle for existence apply to man only in his rudimentary state or in his character as an animal. Of humanity, desire of improvement is the motive power. There is no need, therefore, of importing the language, fast becoming a jargon, of evolution into our general treatment of history. Bees, ants, and beavers are marvels of nature in their way. But they show no desire for improvement, and make no effort to improve. Man alone aspires. The aspiration is weak in the lower races of men, strong in the higher. Of its existence and of the different degrees in which it exists, science may be able to give an account. But it certainly is not the offspring of unreason, nor can it be aided in any way by superstition or by any rejection of truth.

A work on the foundations of religious belief by the leader of a party in the British House of Commons, who is by some marked out as a future Prime Minister, shows, like the theological and cosmogonical essays of Mr. Gladstone, the increasing interest felt about the problems, not only by divines and philosophers, but by men of the world. In Mr. Balfour's case the union of speculation with politics is the more striking, inasmuch as his work is one of abstruse philosophy. It is by metaphysical arguments that he undertakes to overthrow systems opposed to religion, and to rebuild the dilapidated edifice on new and surer foundations. He is thus treading in the steps of Coleridge, the great religious philosopher of the English Church. It is to a limited circle of readers that he appeals. Ordinary minds find metaphysics "out of their *welkin*," to use the words of the Clown in *Twelfth Night*.

They venerate from afar a study which has engaged and still engages the attention of powerful intellects. But they are themselves lost in the region in which "transcendental solipsism" has its home. They are unable to see at what definitive conclusions, still more, at what practical conclusions, such as might influence conduct, philosophy has arrived. Metaphysic seems to them to be in a perpetual state of flux. "The theories of the great metaphysicians of the past," Mr. Balfour says, "are no concern of ours." They would surely concern us, however, if, like successive schools of science, they had made some real discoveries and left something substantial behind them. But as Mr. Balfour plaintively tells us, the system of Plato, notwithstanding the beauty of its literary vesture, has no effectual vitality; our debts to Aristotle, though immense, "do not include a tenable theory of the universe"; in the Stoic metaphysics "nobody takes any interest"; the Neo-Platonists were mystics, and in mysticism Mr. Balfour recognizes an undying element of human thought, but "nobody is concerned about their hierarchy of beings connecting through infinite gradations the Absolute at one end of the scale with matter at the other"; the metaphysics of Descartes "are not more living than his physics"; neither "his two substances, nor the single substance of Spinoza, nor the innumerable substances of Leibnitz satisfy the searcher after truth." Had these several systems been investigations of matters in which real discovery was possible, each of them surely would have discovered something, and a certain interest in each of them would remain. But they have flitted like a series of dreams, or a succession of kaleidoscopic variations. Mr. Balfour doubts "whether any metaphysical philosopher before Kant can be said to have made contributions to this subject (a theory of nature) which at the present day need to be taken into serious account," and he presently proceeds to indicate that "Kant's doctrines, even as modified by his successors, do not provide a sound basis for an epistemology of nature." Mr. Balfour seems even to think that philosophy is in some degree a matter of national temperament. He says that the philosophy of Kant and other German philosophers will never be thoroughly received so as to form standards of reference in any English-speaking community "until the ideas of these speculative giants are thoroughly re-thought by Englishmen and reproduced in a shape which ordinary Englishmen will

consent to assimilate." "Under ordinary conditions," he says, "philosophy cannot, like science, become international." This seems as much as saying that philosophy is still not a department of science, or a real investigation resulting in truths evident to all the world alike, but a mode of looking at things which may vary with national peculiarities of mind and character.

Locke, as Mr. Balfour reminds us, toward the end of his great work assures his readers that he "suspects that natural philosophy is not capable of being made science," and serenely draws from his admissions the moral that "as we are so little fitted to frame theories about this present world we had better devote our energies to preparing for the next." Perhaps we might amend the suggestion by saying that most of us had better devote our energies to the search for attainable truth and to the improvement of our character and estate in this world as a preparation for the world to come. A man so metaphysical in his cast as Emerson is obliged to say that we know nothing of nature or of ourselves, and that man has not "taken one step towards the solution of the problem of his destiny."

Before the relation of mind and body had been proved, and while the mind was supposed to have a divine origin of its own and to be a sojourner in the body as a temporary home or prison-house, it was perhaps easier to believe, as did the mediæval philosophers, that in the mind there was a source of knowledge about the universe apart from the perceptions of sense, and that the world might be studied, not by observation, but by introspection, and even through the analysis of language as the embodiment of ideas. Transcendental Solipsism and a world constructed out of categories would, under those conditions, have their day. Something of the mediæval disposition seems to lurk in the effort to demonstrate that the material world has no existence apart from our perceptions. Be this true or not, it can make little difference in our theological or spiritual position. The fact must be the same in the case of a dog as in the case of a man.

Most of us, therefore, will be content to look on while Mr. Balfour's metaphysical blade, flashing to the right and left, disposes of "Naturalism" on the one hand and of Transcendentalism on the other. We have only to put in a gentle *caveat* against any idea of driving the world back through general scepticism to faith. Scepticism, not only general, but universal, is more likely

to be the ultimate result, and any faith which is not spontaneous, whether it be begotten of ecclesiastical pressure or intellectual despair, is, and in the end will show itself to be, merely veiled disbelief. The catastrophe of Dean Mansel, who, while he was trying in the interest of orthodoxy, to cut the ground from under the feet of the Rationalist, himself inadvertently demonstrated the impossibility of believing in God, was an awful warning to the polemical tactician.

Mr. Balfour gets on more practical ground and comes more within the range of general interest when he proceeds to set up authority apart from reason as a foundation of theological belief. Above reason authority must apparently be if it is apart from it, for wherever authority has established itself reason must give way, while it has no means of constraining the submission of authority. No one could be less inclined to presumptuous rationalism than Butler, who, in his work, which though in partial ruin is still great, with noble frankness accepts reason as our only guide to truth. In combating the objections against the evidences of Christianity, Butler says that "he expresses himself with caution lest he should be mistaken to vilify reason, which is indeed the only faculty we have to judge concerning anything, even revelation." What is deference to authority but the deference to superior knowledge or wisdom which reason pays, and which, if its grounds, intellectual or moral, fail or become doubtful, reason will withdraw? This is just as true with regard to the authority of tradition as with regard to that of a living informant or adviser; just as true with regard to the authority of a Church as with regard to that of an individual teacher or guide. Authority, Mr. Balfour says, as the term is used by him, "is in all cases contrasted with reason and stands for that group of non-rational causes, moral, social, and educational, which produces its results by psychic processes other than reason." A writer may affix to a term any sense he pleases for his personal convenience; but the reasoning of the psychic process of deference to authority, though undeveloped, and, perhaps, till it is challenged, unconscious, whether its cause be moral, social, or educative, is capable of being presented in a rational form, and cannot, therefore, be rightly called non-rational. There is, of course, a sort of authority, or what is so styled, which impresses itself by means other than rational, such as religious persecution, priestly thaumaturgy,

spiritual terrorism, or social tyranny. But in this Mr. Balfour would not recognize a source of truth or foundation of theological belief. A philosopher who proposes to rebuild theology, wholly or in part, on the basis of authority, seems bound to provide us with some analysis of authority itself, and some test by which genuine authority may be distinguished from ancient and venerable imposture. Papal infallibility, which Mr. Balfour cites as an instance, does undoubtedly postulate the submission of reason to authority ; but it proved the necessity of that submission by the extermination of the Albigenses and the holocausts of the Inquisition. It is still ready, as its Encyclical and Syllabus intimate, to sustain the demonstration by the help of the secular arm.

So in the case of habit. Our common actions have no doubt become by use automatic, as our common beliefs are accepted without investigation. But if they are challenged, reasons for them can be given. A man eats without thinking, but if he is called upon he can give a good reason for taking food. A soldier obeys the word of command mechanically, but if he were called upon he could give a good reason for his obedience.

Mr. Balfour scarcely lets us see distinctly what is his view of belief in miracles, which must play an important part in any reconstruction or review of the basis of theology, an all-important part, indeed, if Paley was right in saying, as he did in reply to Hume, that there was no way other than miracle in which God could be revealed. He seems inclined to represent the objections to them as philosophical rather than historical, and such as a sounder philosophy may dissipate, intimating that rationalists have approached the inquiry with a predetermination “to force the testimony of existing records into conformity with theories on the truth or falsity of which it is for philosophy not history to pronounce.” This might be said with some justice of Strauss’s first *Life of Jesus*, and perhaps of some other German philosophies of the Gospel history. But the current objections to miracles, with which a theologian has to deal, are clearly of a historical kind. A miracle is an argument addressed through the sense to the understanding, which pronounces that the thing done is supernatural and proof of the intervention of a higher power. It seems inconceivable, if the salvation of the world were to depend on belief in miracles, that Providence should have failed to provide records for the assurance of those who were not eye-witnesses

equal in certainty to the evidence afforded eye-witnesses by sense. Are the records of the miracles which we possess unquestionably authentic and contemporaneous? Were the reporters beyond all suspicion, not only of deceit, but of innocent self-delusion? Were they, looking to the circumstances of their time and their education, likely to be duly critical in their examination of the case? Is there anything in the internal character of the miracles themselves, the demoniac miracles for example, to move suspicion, it being impossible to think that Providence would allow indispensable evidences of vital truth to be stamped with the marks of falsehood? What is the weight of the adverse evidence derived from the silence of external history and the apparent absence of the impression which might have been expected to be made by prodigies such as miraculous darkness and the rising of the dead out of their graves? These questions, daily pressed upon us by scepticism, are strictly historical, and will have to be treated by restorers of theological belief on strictly historical grounds.

Mr. Balfour recognizes mysticism as an "undying element in human thought." That it is not yet dead is evident. Minds not a few have taken refuge in various forms of it. But undying it surely is not. The mystic, however exalted, merely imposes on himself. He creates by a subtle sophistication of his own mind the cloudy object of his faith and worship. He had himself written his Book of Mormon, and hidden it where he found it. In that direction there can be no hope of laying the foundation of a new theological belief.

There can be no hope, apparently, of laying new foundations for a rational theology in any direction excepting that of the study of the universe and of humanity as manifestations of the supreme power in that spirit of thorough-going intellectual honesty of which Huxley, who has just been taken from us, is truly said to have been an illustrious example. That we are made and intended to pursue knowledge is as certain as that we are made and intended to strive for the improvement of our estate, and we cannot tell how far or to what revelations the pursuit may lead us. If revelation is lost to us manifestation remains, and great manifestations appear to be opening on our view. Agnosticism is right, if it is a counsel of honesty, but ought not to be heard if it is a counsel of despair.

GOLDWIN SMITH.